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Press Release

EMERGENCY SHELTERS TO OPERATE THROUGH WEEKEND FOR DISPLACED RESIDENTS

*Thousands flocked to temporary Red Cross facilities for
help after Tropical Storm Isabel hit Maryland*

Baltimore (September 19, 2003) – Nearly one hundred emergency shelters are serving about 4,000 State residents impacted by flooding and power outages stirred by Tropical Storm Isabel, Maryland Department of Human Resources Secretary Christopher J. McCabe said today.

Shelters are operating in 23 of the State's 24 jurisdictions – from low-lying eastern and southern areas of the State to mountainous Western Maryland, where the storm cut a broad path early Friday morning. State officials are working with the American Red Cross to provide food and housing to residents in several counties displaced by flooding and outages. The National Guard is helping to move families to safety.

"Flooding has really devastated some areas of the State, and many families have turned to us for help," said Mr. McCabe. "We are following the Governor's directive to respond quickly to needs, and we are partnering with the American Red Cross to ensure that families are protected and well-fed."

Secretary McCabe said the DHR's emergency shelter plan is part of the Ehrlich Administration's comprehensive plan – spearheaded by the Maryland Emergency Management Agency – to limit damage from one of the largest storms to march through Maryland in recent years.

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Hilton Maynard, administrator of DHR's Office of Emergency Services, said 98 emergency shelters were operating throughout the State late yesterday afternoon. He said shelters were open in every county except for Allegany County – in school buildings and other locations.

Mr. Maynard said DHR staff members are working in shifts to serve the 4,000 residents displaced by the storm, adding that employees will continue serving Marylanders through the weekend.

"Before Isabel's arrival, Governor Ehrlich, Lieutenant Governor Steele and their staffs put an enormous amount of preparation into making sure that help was available in the storm's aftermath, and those preparations really paid off," Secretary McCabe said. "But we still have huge challenges ahead before many residents can return home.

The Secretary warned evacuated residents to wait until State officials declare an area safe before returning and to find out which roads, areas and buildings are secure, as recommended by the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services. He also cautioned residents to follow guidelines from the Maryland Department of Health and Mental Hygiene and take proper precautions to ensure that food and water are safe.

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